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STATE PASS TO USTR FOR RVARGO, CPADILLA, AMALITO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ETRD](#) [ECPS](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [CS](#)

SUBJECT: PRO-CAFTA-DR MARCH DRAWS THOUSANDS IN COSTA RICA

1. (U) On August 9, 2005, workers from more than 60 companies marched to the President's offices to show their support for the United States-Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR). While estimates of the number of participants ranged from 4,000 to 8,000, most media outlets reported that approximately 5,000 workers took part in the peaceful march. The workers urged the President to send the agreement to the Legislative Assembly and for the Assembly to approve CAFTA-DR and the necessary legislation to implement it.

2. (U) The workers expressed concern that the lack of action by the GOCR on this issue will risk jobs and result in more unemployment. "We are worried that CAFTA-DR has not been approved. There are 45,000 unemployed people. Foreign investment may leave the country. We cannot remain isolated," said Ignacio Trejos, worker at Conservas de Valle. The workers also asked the Commission of Eminent Persons, which is analyzing the agreement, to work to ensure the future of their children.

3. (U) President Pacheco, Minister of Foreign Trade (COMEX) Manuel Gonzalez, and Minister of the Economy Gilberto Barrantes met with approximately twenty representatives of the workers to discuss their concerns. Pacheco did not promise to send the agreement to the Assembly but stated that a "response will be given at the appropriate time, and you must respect the process." He deflected attention by saying that the approval of the agreement will be in the hands of the Assembly members.

4. (U) After the meeting, Ministers Gonzalez and Barrantes said that Pacheco has never said he will not send CAFTA-DR to the Assembly. "The workers expressed their support of the President. Some requested that he send the agreement to the Assembly. We take note of their request and the call of the workers of the country," said Gonzalez. He further stated "We are sensitive to your worries and we know many jobs depend on CAFTA-DR. However, now is not the moment to send the project for discussion."

5. (SBU) COMMENT. This event was significant because it was the first organized pro-CAFTA-DR event. The responses from the President and the COMEX Minister speak for themselves. Despite the turnout of thousands of workers who are worried about their jobs, their actions had little immediate impact on the attitude of the Administration. END COMMENT.  
KAPLAN